



The President's Daily Brief

30 December 1969

48

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The final installment of General Giap's recent theoretical article on the war provides further evidence that Hanoi is now concentrating on protecting and building up its forces for the longer term struggle. Party first secretary Le Duan's failure to play an active public role, in contrast to General Giap and other ranking North Vietnamese leaders, has called into question his political standing within the post-Ho regime. (Page 1)

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NORTH VIETNAM

We have received the final installment of Defense Minister Giap's article, the summary version of which was reviewed in The President's Daily Brief. The article contains little that was not covered before.

Basically, Giap calls for continued strong military action by the Communists but urges adequate political preparations before engaging in "climactic phases of the struggle"--indicating his belief that the Communists are not ready for an all-out military effort.

As he has in past articles and utterances, Giap stresses guerrilla warfare, but he also cites the need for big-unit actions and for such tactics as attacks on cities. He makes clear, however, that large-scale actions and urban attacks must be carried out "rationally"--that is, not in ways that will decimate Communist forces or undercut Communist capabilities for dragging out the war indefinitely.

Giap's article fits in with other evidence that the Communists are now concentrating on protecting their over-all position for the longer term struggle. Giap seems to echo the gradual, step-by-step strategy for the war set forth by Hanoi after the costly 1968 offensives and reflected in Communist military tactics since last spring.

* * *

First secretary Le Duan, the ranking Communist party official among Ho Chi Minh's successors, has not played a significant public role since Ho's funeral last September. His absenteeism was most notable during the recent celebrations in Hanoi of three important Communist anniversaries. Defense Minister Giap, National Assembly chairman Truong Chinh, and Premier Pham Van Dong played important parts as usual. Whatever Le Duan has been doing since Ho's death has gone virtually unnoticed in North Vietnam's press and radio. His activities have been noted only twice in recent months, neither time a significant occasion.

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We do not have a firm explanation for Le Duan's removal from the public eye. There have been reports that he has been making an extended tour of the countryside, but such a trip has never been mentioned in official media. Le Duan may be preoccupied with behind-the-scene work in connection with the war or other secret party matters, but his absenteeism also could imply that his standing in the post-Ho regime is less than his nominal party position would suggest.

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NOTES

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France-Israel:

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Israel: The armed forces began major military exercises in the Sinai on 29 December. The maneuvers will last for several days. Since taking Sinai, the Israelis have often conducted exercises in the Peninsula and are building elaborate defensive positions along the Suez Canal and at the entrance to the Gulf of Aqaba. We have no indication that the exercises are a prelude to a major thrust into Egypt, but at a minimum they serve to impress the Arabs.

Ethiopia: No further trouble has been reported from Addis Ababa following the serious clash yesterday between university students and police. This latest incident, however, has given new dimension to the tension that has been building since last fall between students and the government. A major confrontation could be forthcoming.

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